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USDA'S REPORT TO CONSUMERS

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THINGS TO WRITE FOR

Plumbing. If you go in for how-to-do-its on a grand scale--and are planning to build your own home--here's a handy booklet on how to install a safe and adequate plumbing system. Of course, such a project must be done in accordance with state, county or local plumbing codes. But this booklet provides the basic know-how. It also has a good plumbing check-list for house buyers. It tells how to examine and evaluate the condition of the plumbing. For a copy of "Plumbing for the Home and Farmstead," FB-2213, send 10 cents to Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C. 20402.

National Forest Maps. Planning to see America first? Then you'll probably--at one time or another--drive through a National Forest. And if you're the more adventuresome type, a camper, or a nature lover, you'll end up winding through the back country. For a preview of where you're going and what you can expect to see, get a Forest Service map before you drive forth. There are maps for every National Forest, obtainable from the Forest Service regional offices. For the address of the office nearest you, write to: Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. 20250.

FLORAL FACTS

Mum's the Word. Chrysanthemums were the fairest flower of them all last year. And it looks like their popularity will continue into 1966. Growers in the 11 largest cut-flower producing states plan to increase production nearly 4 percent--on top of a 6-percent increase just the year before. Chrysanthemum sales, the U.S. Department of Agriculture reports, totaled nearly \$35 million (wholesale value) in 1965. That's well above the \$30 million received for carnation; rose sales of \$28 million; glad sales, \$15.3 million.

Service Plus. Where else--but a flower shop--could you place a phone order, ask for immediate delivery, and then say "charge it" to a sales clerk who has never seen nor heard of you? Yet that's the basis of the billion-dollar-a-year florist business. A survey by the U.S. Department of Agriculture shows that telephone orders account for about three-fourths of the business. Nearly all flower shops offer free credit and free delivery.



FOOD FACTS

What's in a Name? A lot--if the product has meat in it and has been shipped across a state line. Then it's inspected by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and you know the name accurately describes the product. "Curry sauce with vegetables and beef," for example, indicates more sauce than anything else, a few vegetables and even less beef. Had the product been labeled "beef curry," it would have been the other way around.

Pick the Plentifuls. Swing with the supply and demand pendulum during May--and save. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, there'll be lots of raisins, honey, grape juice and scallops available.

Space-Saving Celery. First it was carrots that lost their tops, now it's celery. A recent U.S. Department of Agriculture marketing study shows that Florida producers could trim \$750,000 annually off their transportation bill by trimming 2 inches off the top of each stalk of celery. So look for shorter celery at your supermarket. Because it's cheaper to ship, it might well be cheaper to buy.

Where You Live; What You Spend. Where you live makes a difference in how much you pay for food. According to U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Bureau of Labor Statistics, a family in the Northeast might pay \$25 a week for the food they eat at home. A comparable family in the West would pay \$22, in the North Central States, \$20, and in the South, only \$18. Northeastern families spend 3 to 4 cents more of their food dollar for meat, poultry and fish. Westerners put a penny or two more on fruits and vegetables. Those living in the North Central region spend more of their food dollar for milk; Southerners, more for cereals and bakery products.

BEAUTIFICATION

Along the Highway. Often the only impression a tourist gets of your state is its highways. A beautification program could make that impression a good one. It would also help control erosion and reduce highway maintenance costs. Over 35 species of annual and perennial plants grow well on the exposed subsoil of highway cuts, fills and ditches. One of the most promising, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Georgia Agricultural Experiment Station which conducted joint research with highway plantings, is crownvetch. A legume with clusters of lavender to white blooms, it grows well on highway embankments and stays green all year around. Honeysuckles also adapt well to steep banks. Daylilies and iris, spaced 3 feet apart, will cover a bank in 2 years and show a profusion of bloom for 6 to 8 weeks in early summer. Periwinkle, English ivy and native broomsedge are good protective coverings.

SENIOR CITIZENS

Aid for the Aged. Will and Teasie Rogers were squatters--living in a dilapidated shack that no one else wanted or felt fit for a dwelling. They had lived there for 20 years--with the wind whipping through the siding, without closets, a sink, running water, a modern stove or kitchen cabinets. But no longer. The Rogers have moved--to a new \$7,000 home purchased through credit obtained from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's senior citizen housing program. Though both Mr. and Mrs. Rogers are over 62 years of age, they got a 30-year loan at 4 percent interest. Their monthly payment is \$35. The Rogers are among some 2,500 elderly people throughout the nation who, in 1965, received over \$10.5 million in USDA credit for the construction and improvement of their homes.

FROM THE RESEARCH LAB

Sweet and Dry. A new process for producing dried fruits is in the offing. It's been developed by U.S. Department of Agriculture scientists who have only to cope with the cost to make it practicable. The process involves covering cut fruits with dry sugar. This removes 60 to 70 percent of their moisture and half their weight. Then, the fruits are drained and dried under vacuum or in air. The result is a product that's good for eating out of hand or for use in breakfast cereals. Besides creating an attractive new food, the sugar treatment prevents most cut fruits from turning brown. Loss of natural volatile flavors is reduced in the process.

Snack or Supplement. You can eat it as a snack or as a high-protein diet supplement--this new food made by the U.S. Department of Agriculture from cereals and cereal-soybean mixtures. It can be used in several ways--deep-fat fried as chips or as an added ingredient to soups and other dishes. The chips have the flavor of meat, popcorn, mushrooms or nuts. (The choice is yours because these were the varied impressions of a panel of tasters.) As a high-energy food item, the cereal-soybean mixtures are well-suited for feeding the hungry in countries where eggs, meat, milk and cheese are scarce.

Better Paints and Plastics. Now that they've found a way to do it, U.S. Department of Agriculture scientists say there's nothing to it--the conversion of crude pine gum into a low-cost chemical for making paints and plastics. The new process was developed at the USDA Naval Stores Laboratory at Olustee, Fla. And it produces a chemical (diepoxide) that could be extremely useful in the production of high-quality plastics, adhesives, paints, and molded plastics for making such items as toys and kitchen utensils. Not only does the new product work well, it's easy and inexpensive to produce.

In An Emergency. With a watchful eye focused on the future, U.S. Department of Agriculture scientists have developed an emergency method for washing strontium 90 fallout off wheat. The process requires simple equipment and low-cost material. To remove the fallout, the wheat is washed in a very weak acid solution, then rinsed, drained, run through a centrifuge, and dried. This operation could be quickly and easily fitted into a standard mill without damaging baking quality of the flour.

Discovery. A second big breakthrough in determining the structure of the basic cell components influencing heredity has been made by two U.S. Department of Agriculture scientists. Dr. James T. Madison and George A. Everett, biochemists, have identified the structure of another nucleic acid, tyrosine RNA. The first such structure was identified last year after 7 years of research. Identity of the second followed in less than 15 months. The discoveries open new hope for the control of genetic defects and disease, including one line of attack on cancer.

IN THE KITCHEN

A Matter of Semantics. Dishwashers sanitize but do not sterilize your dishes. Tests conducted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture show that some microorganisms survive in an automatic dishwasher. However, only a few. And, of course, the dishwasher is much more effective in destroying bacteria than washing the dishes by hand.

Eggs Are Economical. Eggs are an economical meat substitute--any time of the year. And you can save twice by buying Grade B eggs rather than Grade A for cooking. The U. S. Department of Agriculture says Grade B eggs are just as nutritious as Grade A, just as good scrambled, in a casserole or souffle.

FOR YOUR PROTECTION

Tighter Controls. Food shoppers will be assured of an extra measure of safety as the result of new federal procedures adopted recently for measuring pesticide residues when they occur in food crops. Many pesticides were previously registered with the U.S. Department of Agriculture on a "no residue" basis, because no pesticide traces were found in food by the analytical methods then available. However, newer, more sensitive methods for detecting trace amounts are now available. As a result, USDA and the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare are requiring a safe, low-level residue tolerance be set for every registered pesticide used on food crops, no matter how insignificant the amount of residue involved. The new procedures, based upon the latest scientific developments, spell out in greater detail the federal safety standards protecting the consumer from possible pesticide hazards.

Play It Safe. Malathion is one of the safest insecticides, says the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Its toxicity to humans, livestock and wildlife is low. Its residues disappear quickly. But when you use pesticides in house or garden be sure to read the label and follow instructions carefully.

RECREATION

Visa to All Outdoors. Per person, per car, per year. Which do you want? You can get recreation permits in three colors--green, blue and gold. But the gold is your best buy. It's your ticket to a carload of fun all year around. Instead of bumper stickers, this year's permits will be in the form of wallet-size cards. A \$7 card will admit a carload of people to more than 7,000 government recreation areas an unlimited number of times during the year. Permits are on sale at the entrance points to most federal lands, numerous government offices, and the offices of the American Automobile Association.

FOR YOUR YARD

Hardy Hedge. It's a far piece from Yugoslavia to Cheyenne, Wyo., yet here's a shrub that's made the trip and adapted well. It's a privet--the only one to withstand the wintry weather of Wyoming for more than one or two years. The plant, cold-hardy and drought-resistant, is particularly adapted to the northern prairie and eastern Great Plains states. It grows into a dense hedge that thrives with clipping. The Cheyenne privet has dark olive-green leaves that stay green well into autumn and shiny jet-black berries that hold well into winter. This new variety, developed by USDA and the State agricultural experiment stations of the North Central Region, will soon be available to homeowners. So if you live in the upper north central states, look for Cheyenne--the hedge that came into the cold.

How Many, How Much. How many seeds you get in a package of lawn seed depends on what seed you buy. And usually the price is pretty much in the same proportion--the more seeds, the higher the price. The U.S. Department of Agriculture says that in a one-pound box of Kentucky bluegrass you'll get 2,177,250 tiny seeds (each a potential blade of grass). A pound of red fescue contains 544,000 seeds; a pound of ryegrass, 226,800.

SERVICE is a monthly newsletter of consumer interest. It is designed for those who report to the individual consumer rather than for mass distribution. For information about items in this issue, write: Jeanne S. Park, Editor, SERVICE, Office of Information, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C., 20250.